

MINUTES

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 57th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Call to Order: By **CHAIRMAN BILL THOMAS**, on April 18, 2001 at
1:30 P.M., in Room 152 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Rep. Bill Thomas, Chairman (R)
Rep. Roy Brown, Vice Chairman (R)
Rep. Trudi Schmidt, Vice Chairman (D)
Rep. Tom Dell (D)
Rep. John Esp (R)
Rep. Tom Facey (D)
Rep. Dennis Himmelberger (R)
Rep. Larry Jent (D)
Rep. Brad Newman (D)
Rep. Mark Noennig (R)
Rep. Holly Raser (D)
Rep. Diane Rice (R)
Rep. Rick Ripley (R)
Rep. Jim Shockley (R)
Rep. James Whitaker (R)

Members Excused: Rep. Tom Dell (D)

Members Absent: Rep. Michelle Lee (D)

Staff Present: David Niss, Legislative Branch
Pati O'Reilly, Committee Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and
discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing(s) & Date(s) Posted: SJR 22, 4/16/01
Executive Action: SJR 22

HEARING ON SJR 22

Sponsor: Sen. Christeans, SD 23.

Proponents: Steve Turkowitz, MT Auto Dealers
Claudia Clifford, State Auditors Office

Joyce Brown, State Employee Benefits
Don Allen, MT Benefits and Life
Tom Schneider, MT Public Employees Assn.
Susan Witte, Blue Cross/Blue Shield
Webb Brown, MT Chamber of Commerce
Riley Johnson, NFIB
Sami Butler, MT Assn of Nurses

Opponents: None

Opening Statement by Sponsor: Senator Christeans, SD 23 introduced SJR 22. This resolution came about because of SB 409. SB 409 brought attention to the problems which we are experiencing with health care insurance in Montana. "An appropriate interim committee in sufficient staff resources be directed to study health care and the increasing cost of health insurance." ***{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 1.5}***

Proponents' Testimony: Steve Turkowitz, MT Auto Dealers Assn. We have provided health insurance for our members and their employees since 1947. The cost of health care has doubled and the benefits have decreased. We cover over 4,000 people and our costs in 2000 exceeded over 5 million dollars for health care, our costs for 1989 was close to 2 million. We need insurance at a cost we can afford. ***{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 1.5 - 4.1}***

Claudia Clifford, State Auditors Office. I passed out an article from April 2000 that says "health care costs will cause pain". We have had over 35,000 calls a year about health care related subjects, mostly regarding rising health care insurance costs. **EXHIBIT(huh87a01)** ***{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 4.1 - 5.8}***

Joyce Brown, St. Employee Benefits Plan. I sent a memo to Governor Martz, at the beginning of this session, regarding the rising cost of health insurance. We need a study to find a solution to this problem. My office will gladly offer our services to help with this study. ***{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 5.8 - 8.1}***

Don Allen, MT Benefits and Life. There have a lot of studies over the past years that we have participated in. We need to address the high cost of insurance and how Montanans can afford the premiums. ***{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 8.1 - 10.2}***

Tom Schneider, MT Public Employees Association. I sat on several plans and all are experiencing the afford ability problems. Both the public and private sector are facing the same problems. I have served on several interim committees over the past 25 years. Most of the studies are on the shelf. I urge you to appoint people who

are coming back and are willing to deal with the problems. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 10.2 - 12.2}**

Susan Witte, Blue Cross/Blue Shield. We think this is a good idea and are willing to commit our resources to this committee. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 12.2 - 13}**

Webb Brown, MT Chamber of Commerce. We are blessed with great health care in Montana, however we are now facing staggering costs for this health care. We need to study this and make certain that the information gathered is used to draft legislation to address these issues. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 13 - 15}**

Riley Johnson, NFIB. We support this legislation. Last fall we sent out a survey and asked how many businesses were forced to drop their health insurance due to costs. About 16 percent had been forced to drop their insurance plans. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 15 - 17}**

Sami Butler, MT Nurses Association. We support this study as it will be beneficial to the long term care facilities and hospitals. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 17 - 18.5}**

Opponents' Testimony: None

Informational Testimony: None

Questions from Committee Members and Responses: **Sen. Christeans and Claudia Clifford** answered questions from committee members. Most questions were about the cost of insurance and what alternatives there was for the Montana citizens. They also explained that this bill originated because of the testimony on HB 409. **Sen. Christeans** believes there will be some sort of funding for this bill. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 18.5 - 22}**

Closing by Sponsor: **Sen. Christeans** closed SJR 22. He addressed the needs of Montanans and the immediate need for health insurance in Montana. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 22 - 26.6}**

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SJR 22

Motion/Vote: **REP. SCHMIDT** moved that **SJR 22 BE CONCURRED IN.** Motion carried unanimously. **Rep. Thomas** to carry on house floor. **{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 26.6 - 29}**

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 2:10 P.M.

REP. BILL THOMAS, Chairman

PATI O'REILLY, Secretary

BT/PO